

STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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A CHANGE IN THE WIND

BY

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Abstract

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The Cold War is over - the threat of communist expansion is gone - and the American public is turning both inward and isolationist, focusing on domestic policies. This strategic study addresses the recent change in the strategic environment, as it pertains to drugs. It depicts the impact on the strategic environment caused by alliances between transnational criminal organizations. It describes the impact of these alliances at the international level, especially on Mexico, and the United States. It argues that U.S. citizens have mandated a need for combating drug trafficking. It suggests that our government must relook its current position and assign our armed forces a lead role in stopping the illicit flow of drugs from outside the United States. It also recommends that our military establishment free itself of its Cold War paradigms and realize the importance of this mission to the American public.

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Cortez was tired and ready to go home. He never thought he would see this day, but things were changing in the Texas drug market. For three days they had been meeting. For years the Mexican Mafia had been fighting the Texas Syndicate and the Aryan Brotherhood for supremacy of the Lone Star state. However, here they were together, his jefe Ernesto (Neto) Mirelez (leader of the Mexican Mafia) and James Schultz, the leader of the Texas Syndicate. For the past four months the Mexican Mafia had witnessed an infringement in their area. The perpetrators were not their normal foes the Syndicate or the Brotherhood. Instead they were the Crips, a predominately black gang based out of California. Now the Crips were beginning to make inroads in West Texas. Although they had only come across a few of the Crips (and they were now dead), there was information that Crips had set up shop in Bracketville. Now the leaders of the two biggest gangs were meeting to divide Texas into zones of responsibility in order to deal with this new threat. So far everything had gone well. The Mexican Mafia would manage and control western Texas, while the Syndicate would do the same in the East. The boundary they had agreed on ran from Houston through Austin and to Dallas. Now the only question which needed to be settled was who would control Houston.

Although the names and cities may have been different, this scenario actually happened in the late 1980's. The Crips of California were expanding into Texas, and the gang leaders of two of the largest gangs in Texas had set aside their differences in order to deal with this new threat.

Unbridled growth in the illicit narcotics trade and a world-wide proliferation of narcotics trafficking goes unchecked and overwhelms the state and national law enforcement efforts of many countries. Police forces are ill-equipped and poorly prepared to combat narcotics traffickers outfitted with the most sophisticated electronics and weapons that illegal profits from drugs enables them to purchase.

This paper is about the nature of the current strategic environment as it pertains to drugs: It explains why there is an international drug problem of significant proportions; what the drug trade is doing to Mexico, a vital ally with whom we share not only a border but many economic and social ties; and explains, most importantly, the corrosive effect drugs are having on America. The United States currently has the capability, but lacks the political will to deal with the problem. This paper also asserts that the United States government must wake up to the fact that the strategic environment as it pertains to drugs has changed. That key to this change has been the formation of strategic alliances among criminal organizations. Furthermore, the results of these alliances are already impacting on the United States and are posing an enormous threat to our society. As a result, to combat the threat posed by these alliances our government must change its current strategy.

THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL THREAT

"Illegal drugs unfortunately remain a growth industry. They flaunted their undeniable capacity to corrupt governments. And they showed that often, far from crippling an organization, the arrest of a drug baron may only create a temporary job opening"¹

United States Department of State
International Narcotic Control Strategy - Report
March 1996

In March 1996, the President of the United States submitted to Congress his decision on narcotics certification for thirty-one countries. Accompanying the decision was the International Narcotic Control Strategy (INCS), published by the United States Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. INCS informs Congress "which nations have cooperated with or take adequate steps on their own, to achieve full compliance with the goals and objectives of the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances."²

The 1996 International Narcotic Control Strategy was very upbeat concerning the headway being made in the war against drugs. Foremost in its list of accomplishments was the arrest and extradition of some of the most notorious drug figures in the world. In Colombia, the dismantling of the Cali cartel, once one of the largest and most powerful cocaine cartels in the world, continued with the arrest of several of its key leaders. Coupled with the dismantling of the Medellin cartel two years earlier, this accomplishment by the Colombian govern-

ment was viewed as causing a major disruption in cocaine trafficking. Southeast and Southwest Asia also contributed on the heroin side. Pakistan extradited to the United States, "three leading heroin traffickers, Iqbal Baig and two of his deputies."³ "Likewise, Thailand began extradition proceeding against ten major drug traffickers associated with the region's most notorious drug warlord, Khun Sa."⁴

The good news continued as the report cited crop eradication by Peru, Colombia, and Bolivia. The Bolivian eradication effort was cited as the most significant, with the "destruction of nearly 5,500 hectares of mature coca, reducing potential leaf production by five percent."⁵ The cocaine drug trade was also hampered by the Peruvian military's disruption of its "airbridge" aerial supply route.

However, neither the arrest and indictment of key drug leaders, the embracing of crop eradication by other nations, nor the interdiction of Peru's cocaine "airbridge" could stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. Critical to the spread of illicit drugs throughout the world were the demise of the former Soviet Union, the forging of strategic alliances by national criminal organizations, and the emergence of a new product, "synthetic drugs". The collapse of the former Soviet Union served to open national borders, to increase global telecommunications, and to expand financial and trading networks. The disintegration of the Soviet Union also caused vacuums in the criminal justice systems of Russia and some of its former allies. Additionally, it contributed to the underemployment or unemployment of highly educated professional people. Taking advantage of

transparent borders, advances in telecommunications technology, expanded global markets and crippled economic and justice systems were the "transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)." ⁶

Transnational criminal organizations are formed for several reasons: to facilitate access to new markets, to improve one's position against a rival, to merge the different strengths of two different organizations and minimize the weakness of each, and to minimize risks. Examples of strategic alliances which have had a major impact in illicit drug trafficking are those between the cocaine cartels and the Sicilian Mafia, Nigerians, and Mexican criminal families.

The alliance between the cocaine cartels and the Sicilian Mafia has provided a mutual benefit for both organizations. Always seeking new business opportunities, the Cali cartel allied itself with the Sicilians in order to offset potential losses in the United States, for access to a newer and larger market, to reduce risks, and to facilitate cocaine distribution through an established distribution network. ⁷

Facing potential losses in revenue due to the United States crackdown on illicit drug trafficking, the Cali cartel allied itself with the Sicilians in order to gain greater access to the European market. Although the Colombians had been making advances in the Euro market, they paid a tremendous price in the number of people arrested. However, the most important reason for the alliance was the protection provided by the Sicilian Mafia. Additional benefits included the Mafia's knowledge of local conditions, access to an established heroin distribution network, and the Mafia's ability to neutralize local law enforcement agencies. ⁸

From the Sicilian's perspective the alliance with the cocaine cartel provided a new high-demand and profitable product and allowed recouping of heroin market losses in both the United States and Europe. Once the major refiner and distributor in the United States for vast amounts of Asian heroin, Chinese heroin producers are now refining and distributing their own product. The result, by the late 1980's Southeast Asian heroin organizations had emerged as the dominate force in the U.S. heroin market. The same results were witnessed by the Sicilians in their European market. Likewise, Turkish criminal organizations are now making tremendous headway into the European market through the production, refinement and distribution of heroin utilizing traditional Balkan smuggling routes.⁹

The alliance between the cocaine cartels and Nigerian criminal organizations is one of "product exchange"¹⁰ - - in which Nigerians provide heroin to Colombian Cartels in exchange for cocaine. The resulting ability to diversify has allowed the Nigerians, who were once known only as couriers, to become major players in drug trafficking circles. It has also allowed them to make inroads in cocaine trafficking into the Western Hemisphere. In return, access to heroin has allowed Colombian cartels to develop their own heroin market.¹¹

The most natural and powerful alliance formed in the 1990's has been between the Colombian cartels and Mexican drug trafficking families. The primary purpose of this alliance is "risk reduction".¹² Among the many risks associated with criminal activities are: interdiction or seizure of the illicit product being provided, apprehension of members of the organization, infiltration of the organization, and the seizure of its profits.¹³

During the 1980's, most Colombian cocaine entered the United States through South Florida via the Caribbean. However, an increase in U.S. law enforcement efforts in this area forced the Colombians to seek a new route into the United States. The result was an alliance between the Colombian cartels and Mexican smuggling families: the cartels provide the goods, while the Mexican families provide knowledge of the local area, knowledge of the U.S. border, use of well developed smuggling routes, and their long standing ability to neutralize law enforcement agencies. A natural merger therefore resulted between producing and distributing organizations.

Another major problem in counter narcotics is the emergence and increased use of synthetic drugs, especially methamphetamine. What is especially troublesome about this new product is that it frees traffickers from reliance upon crops like coca and poppy, which are susceptible to eradication. Synthetic drugs can be manufactured relatively cheaply from easily obtainable drugs. The expansion of the synthetic drug market has allowed criminal organizations to tap into the pool of underemployed or unemployed professionals like chemists from the former Soviet Union. The laboratories required to produce the product are quite mobile, thus harder to target by law enforcement agencies. Most of all, the peculiar features of the synthetic drug market allows drug organizations to control the whole process of the drug from production to the sale of the drug on the street, thereby giving criminal organizations maximum revenues while minimizing liabilities.¹⁴

Although progress is being made against illicit drugs, our government must come to grips with the fact that the strategic environment – is especially as it pertains to drug trafficking – has changed. First, criminal organizations that deal in illegal drug trafficking are no longer simply a domestic problem; they operate globally. Second, these international drug organizations are so highly sophisticated, adaptable, and powerful that they are overwhelming the capability of law enforcement agencies in some countries.

For example, their sophistication is evident in their willingness to form alliances in order to gain access to emerging markets, to reduce risks, and to facilitate distribution of illicit drugs through established distribution networks. They have also shown adaptability through nurturing of new markets and new products. For instance, they have opened new markets in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to offset any potential losses in the United States. Furthermore, they have invested in new products such as “synthetic” drugs, to divorce themselves from reliance upon crops like cocoa and poppy that are susceptible to eradication. In addition, they have invested in “synthetic” drugs because this product allows them to control the whole process from the production to the sale on the street, thus giving the criminal organizations maximum revenues. Above all, they demonstrated the power by undermining the legal system of such countries as Italy, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico.

THE MEXICAN CARTELS - AN EMERGING POWER

"No country in the world poses a more immediate narcotics threat to the United States than Mexico"¹⁵

**United States Department of State
International Narcotic Control Strategy - Report
March 1996**

The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993 and the 1995 bail out of the Mexican peso by the United States offer ample evidence that more than just 2,000 miles of border connect the United States and Mexico. In recent years, however, Mexico has not only been struggling economically (devaluation of peso) and politically (Chiapas revolt), it has also been attempting to cope with an illicit drug trade that is corrupting Mexican police and governmental institutions.

Although Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo is attempting to come to grips with illicit trafficking in Mexico, new trends in this area continue to raise concerns. For example, Mexican drug organizations that had traditionally acted only as transshippers for Colombian drug cartels have now developed the sophistication, connections, capability, and distribution network required to become independent agencies. Also, these organizations are so powerful that they already dominate the synthetic drug trade within the United States. Further, Mexico's unregulated banking sector makes it easy for criminal organizations to launder money. Some observers fear that drug-spawned corruption is becoming so wide spread within the Mexican government that the government itself is becoming virtually dysfunctional.

The desire of Colombian cartels to obtain the most secure and direct route into the United States led to the alliance of the Colombian cartels and Mexican drug trafficking cartels. The most prominent Mexican drug trafficking cartels are the Gulf, Caro-Quintero, Juarez, and Tijuana. Although there is no recorded history on Mexican drug cartels, the emergence of such cartels should not be surprising given Mexico's location, long tradition of smuggling illegal aliens, and ability to neutralize law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border.

The Gulf cartel, "headed by Juan Garcia-Abrego, operates out of the cities of Matamoros and Monterey, Mexico, on the Gulf of Mexico."¹⁶ Its distribution network is said to extend "from the Yucatan area in Mexico, through South Texas, all the way to New York."¹⁷ Garcia-Abrego and his organization are both ruthless and innovative. Abrego is said to have been the pioneer of deals with the Cali cartel, in which payment for services rendered was made in cocaine. This exchange of goods for services allowed this organization to establish its own cocaine distribution network. The Gulf cartel thus gained an increase in revenues, the transition of the organization from transshiper to distributor, and the elevation of the organization to major player in the Mexican drug market.¹⁸

A highly sophisticated organization, the Gulf cartel is also responsible for the shipment of bulk amounts of cash back to the Colombian cartels. "During a four year period, from 1989 to 1993, fifty-three million dollars of illegal revenue was seized in connection with this organization."¹⁹ Inaction on the part of the Mexican government against the Gulf cartel is directly attributed to Garcia-Abrego's "links to leading political figures in the Mexican political elite."²⁰

The Caro-Quintero cartel was previously "led by Rafeal Caro-Quintero."²¹ However since his capture and imprisonment due to his involvement in the torture and murder of DEA agent Enrique (Kiki) Camarena, his brother Miguel Caro-Quintero has been running the organization. "The Caro-Quintero cartel is involved in the cultivation, production and distribution of heroin and marijuana and the transportation of Colombian cocaine into the U.S."²²

The Juarez cartel is the largest of the Mexican cartels and is currently "led by Amado Carrillo-Fuentez."²³ This drug trafficking cartel operates out of the city of Juarez, Mexico, across from El Paso, Texas. One of the most notorious and powerful traffickers, Amado runs this organization "from his ranch headquarters."²⁴ He is reported to be the person that the Cali cartels trust the most; so he has become the "primary intermediary between the Mexican cartels and Cali."²⁵

He is known as the "The Lord of the Heavens"²⁶ because he "owns several airline companies, which enables him to fly 727s from Colombia to Mexico."²⁷ He is "estimated to be worth over 15 billion dollars."²⁸ Extremely ruthless, his organization may be responsible for an increasing number of murders in Juarez. For example, "in July 96, the leader of a local juvenile gang, which was used by the Juarez cartel for drug smuggling across the border was found shot 23 times in the head."²⁹ The Juarez cartel is so powerful it is on the verge of establishing its own cocaine connections in both "Bolivia and Peru."³⁰

The Tijuana cartel is headed "by the Arrellano-Felix brothers."³¹ An extremely violent group, "they control most of the drugs crossing the border on the west coast, between Tijuana and Mexicali."³² Feuding between the Tijuana cartel

and a rival organization is thought to have led to the killing of Catholic Cardinal Posadas-Campo at the Guadalajara airport in 1993.³³

The alliance between all the Mexican cartels and the Colombian cartels has had a tremendous impact on both Mexico and the United States. As of 1996, seventy percent of all cocaine bound for the United States market came through Mexico. Also, Mexican cartel capabilities are so vast that cocaine shipments are now arriving via commercial cargo jet. Consequently, cocaine seizures in the United States, which used to be measured in pounds, are now measured in tons. For example, in late 1989, the DEA seized a shipment of over 21.5 tons of cocaine in Sylmar, California. This shipment came across the border at El Paso and had been trucked to the West Coast. Although initially elated with the results of their investigation and seizure, DEA agents were stunned when records found within the cocaine shipment indicated that within a three month period over 55 tons of cocaine (from one drug organization) had succeed in crossing into the U.S. border and was already on the streets.³⁴

The efficiency and effectiveness of Mexican cartels to handle large amounts of cocaine is not the only windfall from this strategic alliance. The astronomical amount of money and the power which results from the sale of illicit drugs has allowed the Mexican cartels to seek, expand, and dominate other drug markets, such as methamphetamines (synthetic drugs). The status of the Mexican cartels in the synthetic drug trade was captured in both the 1996 INCS report and the testimony of Mr. Thomas A. Constantine, DEA, before the Senate Arms Relations committee. Both the INCS report and Mr. Constantine's testimony veri-

fied that Mexican cartels dominate the United States synthetic drug market. Both reports also corroborated the fact that Mexican drug trafficking organizations have established clandestine manufacturing operations (of synthetic drugs) on both sides of the border. However, during Mr. Constantine's testimony he also stated that Mexican cartels "have established international connections in Europe, Asia and the Far East to obtain the shipments of tons of precursor chemicals, particularly ephedrine, to addresses in both the United States and Mexico."³⁵ He went on to state that these connections provide Mexican drug organizations "the necessary precursor chemicals to make the drugs."³⁶ He also declared that "from mid-1993 to early 1995, DEA documented the diversion of almost 170 tons of ephedrine used in illicit methamphetamine production."³⁷

The rise and pervasiveness of the drug cartels within Mexico's society is directly attributable to the widespread corruption within Mexico's government. For example, Mexico's banking sector, which only recently was privatized, is so unregulated that it has become one of the most important money laundering center for international criminal organizations. Thus, Mexico's criminal organizations have become the major transporters of revenues from illicit drug sales in the U.S. back to Colombia. However, of gravest concern to U.S. government officials is the widespread corruption within the Mexican government, which has been spawned by the money provided through illicit drug trafficking. Corruption is so far reaching and prevalent that it has crept into some of the highest levels of the Mexican government. For example, when a Mexican police task force asked for military backing to arrest Garcia-Abrego, leader of the Gulf Cartel, "the request

was turned down by the office of the presidency (Salinas), even though such assistance was routine in other cases."³⁸ And the revenues from the sale of illicit drugs are so vast "that it was reported that Abrego paid out more than 50 million a dollars a month to keep law enforcement agents away from him."³⁹ Even more horrifying is the fact that a newly appointed federal police Chief Juan Pablo de Tavira "was allegedly poisoned in his sleep, hours before he was to meet with Mexico's Attorney General in order to plan a purge of regional police commanders linked to the drug cartels."⁴⁰

Bottomline, the alliance between Colombian and Mexican cartels was a natural merger between a producer (Colombian cartels) and distribution organizations (Mexican drug cartels). The merger then allowed Mexican cartels to increase their status within the drug trafficking industry from transshipper to major player. It has also allowed the Mexican cartels to gain vast amounts wealth, therefore providing them a greater capability to neutralize law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. Worse yet, it has resulted in the establishment of a major illicit drug staging area just south of the United States border.

Although the Zedillo government has achieved some encouraging results, especially in the apprehension of key members of their major drug organizations and in reforming the judicial and financial systems, there is still much to do. For example, the Mexican government must continue to cooperate and coordinate its law enforcement activities with the United States and other countries. It must legislate and implement financial reforms designed to make it more difficult for criminal organizations to launder their money. Above all, it must destroy its major

drug organizations and re-legitimize its governmental institutions. The fact that the Zedillo government has been unable to accomplish the above tasks is impacting on the United States. Therefore life as we have known it is changing dramatically.

THE IMPACT OF ILLICIT DRUGS ON THE U.S.

"Mr. Chairman, in a few years down the road, I believe it's entirely possible that these newly emerging groups could rise to an equal (or superior) footing with the Cali Mafia. If this happens, life as we know it in both the United States and Mexico will change dramatically. They care little for the devastating impact they have on the people of Mexico and the United States. They are international criminal elements that must be dealt with."⁴¹

Thomas A. Constantine
Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration
Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

In August 1995, Thomas A. Constantine testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding International Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico. Although he provided a great deal of information on the status of Mexican drug trafficking organizations none of his observations seemed more haunting than "If this happens, life as we know it in both the United States and Mexico will change dramatically."⁴²

Like the 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy (INCS) report, the 1996 National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) began on a positive note. It stated the significant progress that had been made against drug use and related crime. It cited that cocaine use among Americans had been reduced by thirty percent since 1992. It also stated that the amount of money Americans had spent on illicit

drugs had declined twenty percent, from an estimated sixty-four billion dollars in 1991 to forty-nine billion in 1993. The report went on to state that the agency had made significant progress against drug related crime with drug related murder down twelve percent since 1989 and robberies down ten percent since 1991.

However, a close analysis of the information provided by the 1996 National Drug Control Strategy and Pulse Check reveals trends that are consistent with current transnational criminal organizational (TCOs) capabilities and market strategies. Current TCO capabilities and strategies include product availability, minimizing risks through diversification, market expansion, and protection.

Statements on product availability were based on production and drug seizure totals. Product availability increased for cocaine, synthetic drugs and marijuana; while availability of heroin was more difficult to document due to the diversification of its production, trafficking and consumption patterns. According to Pulse Check, "all areas of the country report that both cocaine powder (HC1) and crack are readily available."⁴³

According to both Pulse Check and NDCS - 96, the increased use of methamphetamine ("meth") is indicative of its availability. Both these documents report that "meth" is spreading from the west and southwest areas of the United States into our central and southeastern areas. Other synthetic drugs like Rohypnol, LSD, and PCP were also cited: In each case, their increased consumption was indicative of their availability. Of major concern was the method used for distributing LSD, which is now available in every state. LSD is currently dis-

tributed through mail order, which offers the seller maximum insulation from law enforcement and maximum distribution capability.⁴⁴

The availability of marijuana was difficult to determine because it is produced domestically as well as internationally, its distribution network is more decentralized, and more organizations are involved in the distribution of the product. Nevertheless, both of the reports stated that it was the most widely used illicit drug in the U.S. and that there is grave concern on the increased number of users – specifically young Americans. “In 1991, after several years of decline, the number of people trying marijuana for the first time showed a marked increase.”⁴⁵ This was especially true of young people from ages twelve to seventeen, among them marijuana use almost doubled from 1992 to 1994.

However, heroin availability was much harder to document because of the number of different organizations distributing it and because of the various methods of consumption: injection, smoking, and snorting. Nevertheless, its impact was clear: “In 1993 the rate of heroin-related emergency room episodes was 64 per 100,000 population among persons ages 35-44, almost double of what it was in 1988.”⁴⁶

As stated before, strategic alliances have been formed among international drug organizations to minimize risks. In the United States, the impact of these risks reduction alliances is demonstrated by the increase of “double breasting” and the rise in youth and gang violence. Double-breasting dealers sell both cocaine and heroin. “This is a significant development because joint marketing has not been the norm in the drug trade.”⁴⁷

DEA sources report that this practice started approximately two years ago, when mid-level distributors of South American cocaine started pressuring lower-level dealers to sell South American heroin. Always seeking new business opportunities, this move is seen as the cocaine cartels' way of breaking into the heroin market. However, an ugly side-effect of this venture is that "cocaine/crack sellers who have no experience in cutting and diluting heroin, may be using poor cuts or combining heroin with unusual adulterants."⁴⁸ Consider the example of the results of such inexperience: "In February 1996, 43 users in Philadelphia were hospitalized when they suffered loss of consciousness followed by violent delirium after ingesting a combination of high purity heroin and scopolamine."⁴⁹

Building from a market base of hard core addicts, drug-trafficking organizations are making huge inroads into a new market – America's children.

"Hardcore drug addicts are at the heart of our nations drug problem"⁵⁰ and the foundation of future sales. Currently 2.1 million (thirty percent) of all cocaine users are addicts. "These addicts account for two-thirds of all cocaine consumed in the U.S.. It is these who maintain the drug market and keep drug traffickers in business."⁵¹

Using hardcore users as their foundation, drug trafficking organizations are hooking a new generation – our children. The 1995 Monitoring the Future study revealed that "while marijuana use has shown the sharpest increase, the use of other illicit drugs, including LSD, other hallucinogens, amphetamines, and inhalants have also continued on an upward trend,"⁵² especially among 8th, 10th and 12th graders.

Protection of market territories for illicit drug products has become the basis for much of the violence associated with illicit drug organizations. "Gangs – including the Crips, Bloods, Dominicans, Gangster Disciples, Jamaican 'Posses', and others – are responsible for widespread cocaine and crack related violence, which they use to establish and maintain drug distribution monopolies. The migration of gang and posse members to smaller cities and rural areas has also resulted in a dramatic increase in homicides, armed robberies, and assaults in many previously tranquil areas of the country."⁵³ Another impact of this violence is reflected in the fact that "the number of juveniles murdered increased, from 1,738 in 1987 to 2,521 by 1994."⁵⁴

The impact of drugs on our society is tremendous:

- America has suffered 100,000 drug - related deaths in the 1990's alone.
- Over 20,000 of our citizens die every year because of illicit drugs.
- In 1993, the year from which the most recent data is available, Americans spent an estimated 49 billion dollars in illegal drugs.
- Federal, state, and local governments collectively spend about 30 billion annually in combating illegal drugs.
- The annual social cost of illicit drug use is 67 billion dollars, mostly from the consequences of drug related crime.
- Drug-related hospital emergency visits continue to be at record levels over one half million annually.
- Of the nearly 712,000 prison inmates interviewed in 1991, 62% reported they had used drugs regularly at some time in their life.
- Each year over 1 million persons are arrested on drug related charges.⁵⁵

In summary, the impacts of alliances at both the international and local levels is evident in the change in the drug scene within the United States. For example, diversification of Colombian cartels by their entrance into the heroin market is reflected in the emergence of "double breasting" among drug dealers within the United States. Furthermore, the inability of the Mexican government to curb the growth of drug cartels within its borders has caused an increase in amounts of drugs seized and transported from that area. Examples of this impact include the 1989 seizure of 21.5 tons of cocaine in Slymar, California, by DEA Agents, and the increase of availability in cocaine, methamphetamines, and marijuana as reflected in Pulse Check. Of even greater concern is the increase in violence associated with illicit drug trafficking as gangs such as the Crips, Bloods, Dominicans, Gangster Disciples, and others attempt to establish and maintain drug distribution monopolies.

Drugs are a problem in the United States. Because of alliances at the international and local levels, life as we know it has changed. The American people want a solution to the problem. The importance of this issue to Americans was reflected in a Gallup poll commissioned by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in late 1994, when respondents were asked to rank sixteen foreign policy goals by order of their importance. "Curbing the flow of illegal drugs into the United States was the first priority of 89 percent of those polled."⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

"Protecting our nation's security – our people, our territory and our way of life – is my Administration's foremost mission and constitutional duty."⁵⁷

William J. Clinton
President of the United States
National Security Strategy - 1996

Although the United States, in coordination with the international community is making some progress against illicit drug trafficking, drugs are a problem both here at home and in foreign lands. Contributing greatly to the drug problem and the spread of illicit drug trafficking throughout the United States and the international arena has been the forging of alliances by criminal organizations. These alliances have produced criminal organizations that are able to nurture new products, such as synthetic drugs. These organizations now have the capability to gain access to new markets, such as in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, alliances have resulted in the criminal organizations' ability to facilitate the distribution of their products through previously established distribution networks. In addition, alliances resulted in criminal organizations' reducing their risk of interdiction or the seizure of their illicit product, apprehension of their members, infiltration of their organization, and seizure of their profits. Finally, alliances – in particular the one between the Colombian and Mexican cartels – are having tremendous effects on both Mexico and the United States.

For example, since the alliance between Colombian and Mexican cartels, seventy percent of all cocaine bound for the United States now comes through Mexico. Furthermore, law and order within Mexico, which is the foundation of a

democratic way of life, is at risk. Worse for the United States, Mexico has become a staging base for huge cocaine shipments from Colombia. Moreover, the drugs and lawlessness affecting Mexico is spilling across the border and affecting the United States. As a result, our children are afraid to walk their streets at night. The number of juveniles murdered in the United States increased from 1,738 to 2,521, between 1987 and 1994. Because of these alliances, cocaine seizures in the United States that formerly were measured in pounds are now measured in tons. Likewise, Mexican cartels now dominate the United States methamphetamine market. Above all, product availability within the United States has increased for cocaine, methamphetamines (synthetics), and marijuana. Of even greater concern, the number of American children trying such illicit drugs as marijuana is increasing - - especially among children between the ages of 12 to 17.

Unless checked, drug alliances have the potential, fueled by unlimited resources, to overwhelm law enforcement agencies. Clearly, our nation's safety is at risk. As the President indicated in the National Security Strategy, the highest responsibility of our nation is the protection of its people, its territories, and its way of life. Americans can overcome this problem. However, our government must develop a viable and precise strategy for dealing with drugs. The single most effective arm of our government is our armed forces. Therefore, my recommendations are as follows: First, our government must place our armed forces incharge of interdicting the flow of illegal drugs into our country, to radically reduce the supply of drugs in the United States. Placing our armed forces incharge

of interdicting the flow of illicit drugs into the United States will allow state and local governments to continue the fight on American soil through law enforcement , drug treatment, and education, which will reduce the demand for drugs in the demand of drugs in the United States. Second, our armed forces must rid themselves of Cold War paradigms and realize that the counterdrug mission is the most important mission for those we serve – the American public.

ENDNOTES

¹ United States Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, "Executive Summary," International Narcotic Control Strategy Report, March 1996, 1.

² United States Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, "Memorandum For The Secretary of State," International Narcotic Control Strategy Report, March 1996, xii.

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⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Phil Williams, "Sovereignty at Bay," The Washington Quarterly, Winter 1995, <<http://www.alternatives.com/crime/CRIMLINK.HTML>>, 19 January 1997. My analysis of criminal strategic alliances is based on this insightful article.

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²⁶ "Mexican drug kingpin among heirs to Cali cartel," 1995, <http://www2.nando.net/newsroom/ntn/world/080795/world537_5.html>, 19 January 1997.

²⁷ Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "DEA Congressional Testimony - International Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico," 8 August 1995, <<http://www.calyx.com/~schaffer/GOVPUBS/const.1.html>>, 19 January 1997.

²⁸ Javier Rodriguez, "Is Mexico a Narcodemocracy?" Hispanic Link News Service, 1995, <<http://www.latinolink.com/his8133e.html>>, 19 January 1997.

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